



Osborne, M. (2020) Community-Based Participatory Research & Learning Cities, Summary of Webinar 5 of UNESCO/PASCAL Observatory Webinar Series 'Learning Cities' COVID-19 recovery: from research to practice - The challenge of inclusion'. Documentation. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

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GNLC/PASCAL Webinar: *Community-Based Participatory Research & Learning Cities*

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and PASCAL International Observatory

On 18 November 2020, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), together with the PASCAL Observatory, hosted the fifth webinar of the series entitled “Learning Cities’ COVID-19 recovery: from research to practice”. This session focused on Community-Based Participatory Research & Learning Cities

Opening Remarks and Welcome

An opening remark was given by UIL Programme Specialist **Mr Konstantinos Pagratis**, who introduced the moderator for the session, **Ms Catherine Lido**, Professor of Psychology and Adult Learning at the University of Glasgow and Deputy Director of PASCAL in Europe.

There followed welcoming remarks from, **Mr Raúl Valdés Coterá**, Team Leader, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, who welcomed that this webinar involved a collaboration with UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research & Social Responsibility in Higher Education. He emphasised the importance of this area of work, and the importance of collaborative processes that engage all stakeholders in the research process, and which is centred on an understanding community needs and undertaking work that promotes social change. He then introduced the speakers who would provide input through the chair and their focus, as well as the final speaker from the city of Shanghai.

Opening Address

The Opening address/ was given by **Mr. Rajesh Tandon** (Co-Chair, UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research & Social Responsibility in Higher Education & Founder-President, PRIA) from Delhi. He introduced participants to the work of Knowledge for Change (K4C) Global Consortium initiated by the UNESCO Chair. He explained the four purposes of K4C:

1. To develop research capacities of the new generation of community workers and students to gain relevant knowledge, skills and experience in and beyond academia
2. To create an international network on knowledge democracy, justice and equity as a contribution to local, national and global challenges such as the UN SDGs.
3. To create training hubs in parts of the Global South and the excluded North to develop research capacities in local languages, using local learning materials.
4. Knowledge generation in Community-Based Research (CBR), Social Responsibility of Higher Education & pedagogies of training CBR to promote social transformation.

Mr Tandon then explained the mechanisms of the mentor training programme for KC4 Hubs, and provided a map of the 15 hubs that are situated in all continents around the world.

Sassari Hub (Italy) - *Weaving the Community Fabric*

Mr. Andrea Vargiu (Professor, University of Sassari & Coordinator of Sassari K4CHub) and **Mrs Speranza Serra** (Teacher and Community Partner) argued that transformative change can take place by means of coordinated and durable partnerships among all community stakeholders. With this in mind, they see community-university engagement as a common enterprise articulated in short and medium terms actions implemented within a long-term perspective. In order to do so, they developed different forms of PPIs (Permanent Partnership Instruments). Two examples of PPIs were presented. One of them was named PISA (Participatory Platform for Social Innovation and Active Citizenship) which serves as catalyst for community activation in an excluded neighbourhood. Examples were briefly presented of community initiatives realized in the PISA framework. Reference was made to the active mobilisation of parents and children not only in the educational process, but also in revitalizing a highly problematic neighbourhood, promoting social inclusion and community identity. The need for permanent presidiums was underlined. One recent achievement was the opening of the community library which acts as an open laboratory that welcomes the proposals of community partners and has a multiplier effect in a place where children, families, citizens, teachers, researchers and practitioners can meet, share and develop opportunities. The Covid-19 emergency has hit hard on this process of change: it has torn apart the relational tissue that had been laboriously woven over many years. They argued that threads of this tapestry must be re woven now to contrast the devastating effects of the pandemic in the medium and long term. This is a challenge that they believe that they can address thanks to the durable partnership instruments that the community has worked out over time.

Durban Hub (South Africa) - *Preventing drop-outs in Education*

The work of the KC4 Hub in South Africa was presented by **Mr. Darren Lortan** (Durban University of Technology) and **Ms. Diana Hornby** (Director, Community Engagement Division, Rhodes University) with a focus on public schooling. Mr. Lortan shared the South African context, and then focused on a city in the Eastern Cape Province, Makhanda, where Rhodes University is located, and home to 80,000 inhabitants. The city has a very clear divide between the poor and marginalized, and the privileged community. It is also home to some of the best private schools in the country, and some of the worst performing public schools. The focus of the presentation was the city wide education initiative for public schools in the marginalized part of the city.

The statistics presented were compelling in relation to the challenge of drop-out. Annually 1200 pupils enter Grade 1 in the city: 12 years later only 540 write Grade 12, and in 2018 only 180 passed. Because of this drop-out rate, the School Principals engaged the Vice Chancellor of Rhodes University asking for support in 2015 and together a programme was conceptualized "*Reviving Public Schools in Makhanda*". This sought to transform the schooling sector and to create a space where all children would receive an education that would equip them for a life of significance. The key principles of the programme were then described.

PRIA Hub (India) - *Addressing issue of Urban Sanitation*

Mr. Kaustuv Bandyopadhyay (Director, PRIA) and **Mr. Krishan Kumar Joshi** (President, SIC Forum, Ajmer) presented the work of the PRIA hub in the field of urban sanitation. The presentation began with an account of the characteristics of a learning city, and the links that such work has with social inclusion and the SDGs. It continued with an overview of processes that marginalise the urban poor, notably:

- Undercounting (deliberate or erroneous) of informal settlements and households in the settlements leads to exclusion
- Lack of access to information and organisations resulting in lack of voice in decision making
- Lack of accountability by city authorities towards the urban poor leading to denial of rights and entitlements
- Apathy and ignorance of the middle class perpetuating the misery of the urban poor

The presenters then gave an account of what they entitle the Engaged Citizens Responsive City (ECRC), focusing on the city of Ajmer, and an eight-stage process of engaging the urban poor with a focus on sanitation. Guidance was provided on the conditions for enabling the participation and inclusion of the poor.

City of Shanghai - *Community Education Supporting the Community Members during the Pandemic*

Mr Jiacheng Li, Deputy Director, Shanghai Municipal Institute for Lifelong Education (SMILE), China, provided an account of the role of community education and community development during the time of COVID-19. He initially provided an overview of how residents in Chinese communities have been support in learning to adapt their lives during a period of rapid urbanization and rural revitalization. He went on to describe the experience has been garnered in promoting community development through community education during the pandemic period, and how to further develop community education thereafter. This work would be undertaken in the context of a theoretical framework based on lifelong learning, crisis and education, complexity and caring as well as Chinese Enlightenment Theory. He continued by describing the methods that would be used in undertaking this research.

Questions and answers

The followed a series of questions that were posed to the panel by Ms Lido, based on postings made by those who had logged into the webinar. Many questions were posed in the chatroom, and covered the following themes:

- working with the disadvantaged to develop research issues aimed at solving social problem
- establishing the value of peer support
- addressing the lack of funds to help drop-outs in education
- considerations for local languages when conducting research
- digital literacy programs addressing digital divide in education
- the cost component of K4C
- preferred types of leadership for community-based research.

Closing remarks

Mr Mike Osborne, Professor of Adult and Lifelong Learning. Director of Research, School of Education, University of Glasgow and Director of PASCAL made closing remarks, thanking all participants for their excellent presentations. He highlighted the following points:

- From Mr Tandon's remarks, the importance of local knowledge and expertise in addressing SDG solutions
- From the Sassari hub, the vital need to be 'present' in the community

- From the Durban hub, the challenge of overcoming mistrust in communities and the need to build relationships
- From the PRIA hub, the need for constant dialogue with communities at all stages of the process of engagement from design through implementation to monitoring effect
- From Shanghai, the importance of community development through community education in post-Covid recovery.

This summary was written by Professor Michael Osborne, PASCAL Director (Europe), University of Glasgow.